

The crafty mini

Spring is Here! shopper bag



You will need

- Approximately 120 x 120 cm with 1% of 140 x 90 cm sturdy fabric, such as poplin or fabric on cotton or a cotton-blend mix
- Measuring tape or ruler
- Fabric scissors
- Sewing machine and thread
- Iron
- Double-headed pins

Tips

You could add a simple, embroidered message, such as an encouraging message to friends or a message to cheer the day's shoppers.

This is for all the extra market shopping you'll be doing now the days are getting longer. Shopper bags are more environmentally friendly than the plastic kind, which are likely to be phased out over the next few years anyway. Make one for yourself or as a gift for a friend; far more stylish than the green cloth ones commonly sold in supermarkets, they also fold up nicely in the bottom of your handbag. Size is completely up to you, but a finished bag of 35 x 50 cm (14 x 20 in) is most useful, not so small you can't fit a carton of milk, a loaf of bread and some fruit and veges in it, but not so big you'd dislocate your shoulder carrying it when full.

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The crafty mini

The perfect tea cosy



You will need

- 1 Piece of 60 x 60 cm wool jumper (selected for the fit, bag, one large enough to fit around your teapot, the other for the 2 teacups)
- Wool wash
- Pinning mats
- Oversewer's scissors
- Sewing machine and thread

Instructions


- Wash the wool by hand in a heavy plastic wool wash and hotish water and then lay it flat to bleed dry. The high temperature of the water will cause the wool to shrink and felt slightly, so you can cut it without fraying.
- Wrap the larger piece of wool around your teapot, folded over at the top with the direction of the weave facing downwards (which means that the stretch will work back to size around the neck and shoulders) the other side and top to work out how much fabric you will need to finish the top.
- Cut the top edge of your teapot with pinking shears, adding a 6 mm (1/4 in) extra all round for your seam allowance.
- From the contrasting piece of wool, use your oversewer's scissors to cut a decorative shape for the front of the teapot - a heart, circle, oval, teardrop.
- Set the sewing machine to zigzag stitch, then sew the shape to the front of the larger piece of fabric. It's preferable to use a contrasting thread such as pink against white, or yellow against blue.
- Place your two tea cosy shapes together, right sides facing each other. Allow a 6 mm (1/4 in) seam, sew around the edges of fabric, leaving holes for the teapot handle and spout. At the edges of the teapot, reverse-stitch a few times so the seams will not open up.
- Turn under a hem on the bottom edge of the cosy and stitch in place.
- Turn right side out, fill teapot with 1 teaspoon of water for each cup, one for the pot and two for each teacup, then insert the teapot on the table with care.

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The crafty mini

Fridge magnets



You will need

- Fabric (several types)
- Felt
- Pinning mats
- Sewing machine and thread
- Oversewer's scissors
- Self-adhesive magnets, iron-on or spray-on dyes

Instructions

- Cut about five flowers on your fabric, with sewing shears to give you nicely edged tea-cosy tops.
- Place a flower on a double layer of felt.
- Set your sewing machine to the zigzag stitch, and sew around the outside edges of the flower. A contrasting thread looks wonderful!
- Using ordinary oversewer's scissors, cut around the felt surrounding the flower, leaving a few millimetres around the outside to finish it.
- Adhere your zigzagged magnet on the wrong side, then place in fridge door.

Tips

If you get endless requests for mail in your kitchen, you'll offer a magnet and a card for this project instead of buying them. You'll need a date of draft. Give to find them in place, but they work perfectly well and can be used to the back you need.

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The hostess with the mostest

Tempting tableware

For me, much of the pleasure to be had from eating will tend to do with level presentation. The context in which it's served also makes all the difference to the taste. I relish nothing more than delectable fried fish and chips from yesterday's newspaper, buffeted by a salty wind on the beach, or green papaya salad on a plastic plate from a street stall in Thailand, but eating directly out of takeaway containers in my own home or hastily serving guests always seems to ruin a meal for me.

Having a few moments to lay the table properly with a tablecloth, curly napkins and candles or flowers not only adds instant charm and appeal to any dish, but it shows respect for your guests and yourself. Appropriate cutlery for each element of the meal is also important and evokes a special sense of ceremony which can be easily lacking from many modern meals.

Candlelight softens the features of anyone's face, but also has the subtle effect of softening the mood. Just as conversation flows more freely when you add some good music, special touches will make any guest at your table feel valued and relaxed. And if you're not an especially confident cook, this will get everyone in the right mood before they've even taken a bite.



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The crafty mini

Suzie Home-maker's 50s retro apron



You will need

- 40 x 60 cm (16 x 24 in) with cotton in a pretty pattern (a large '50s' is ideal, so look for old-fashioned or changed designs from the era, but if you can't find the right fabric, in a look)
- 20 x 30 cm (8 x 12 in) plain fabric, in a contrasting color
- 2.5 cm-wide (1 in) bias binding to match plain fabric
- Oversewer's shears
- Oversewer's scissors
- Iron
- Sewing machine and thread
- Measuring tape
- Pins
- Ruler

There are one of my favourite things to pick over in the markets. Unlike many other great finds from the '50s, there still is an abundance of truly apron available in striking fabrics and in fairly good condition, because not many people seem to wear them anymore. Always one to jump at the chance for dressing up, I have a modest collection for making days and evenings so perfect. Coordinate your apron with the icing on your freshly baked, humankindly cake or more-bought martini biscuits. It's not purely practical, but not just a decorative nod to a bygone era, it's a fun way of showing off a bit more and more about style, anyway.

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